

MATERIAL FOR MINOR COINS, ETC.

FEBRUARY 19, 1897.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. CHARLES W. STONE, from the Committee on Coinage, Weights, and Measures, submitted the following.

REPORT.

[To accompany H. Res. 242.]

The Committee on Coinage, Weights, and Measures, to whom was referred House Joint Resolution No. 242, respectfully report the same with the recommendation that it do pass.

Our present 5-cent pieces, composed of 25 per cent nickel and 75 per cent copper, are in many respects a satisfactory coin, but after a few years' use they wear smooth and the design on them becomes more or less obliterated, thus indicating that the metal of which they are composed is too soft. The 1-cent piece, composed of 95 per cent copper, 3 per cent tin, and 2 per cent zinc, is a tasty coin when new, but speedily loses its luster and becomes dull and dirty in appearance, and by corrosion becomes a source of danger to health, especially of children. It is particularly the child's coin, often in the child's mouth, and ought to be of material not deleterious to health.

In the judgment of your committee the material of which both these coins are made could be improved. With the view to such improvement the Secretary of the Treasury, for the information of the House and in compliance with its request, has made certain experiments, the results of which were by him communicated to the House under date of January 7, 1897. In that communication he asks for authority to make further experiments with a view of finding a more satisfactory material for the 1-cent coins. Your committee believe this authority should embrace also the 5-cent pieces.

In connection with these investigations the Secretary of the Treasury should have authority to submit to Congress for its approval new designs for coins. Artistically, certain of our present coins are open to well-founded criticism. We ought to allow no other nation to excel either in the material of which our coins are composed or the artistic appropriateness of their devices. Proper authority should be vested in the Secretary of the Treasury to obtain and submit to Congress such new designs as in his judgment would constitute an improvement in the beauty and attractiveness of our metallic currency.